



ink spots: *opinions, news, and reviews from an inkjet*

It was all very well to say “drink me” but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. “No, I’ll look first,” she said, and see whether it’s marked ‘poison’ or not,” for...she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked ‘poison’ it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, first published in 1866.

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Some of the jury wrote down “important;” some wrote “unimportant”

Has there ever been a time in the history of civilization when it was so difficult to determine whether what you are holding in your hand, and are about to eat or drink, is in fact *poison*?

In Wonderland, Alice had some definite ideas about how certain foods affected people: pepper makes people hot-tempered, vinegar makes them sour, chamomile makes them bitter, and “barley-sugar and such things make children sweet-tempered.” If only it were that simple.

Let’s take caffeine, for example, which has gained some respect recently. According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 2000, researchers at the US Dept of Veterans Affairs in Honolulu learned that Hawaiian men of Japanese ancestry who were studied over a period of 30 years were less likely to be diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease if they were coffee drinkers than those who drank no coffee. Caffeine from other foods was also linked to a lower risk of the disease. Researcher Robert Abbott says, “People who have a predisposition to Parkinson’s...may have a dislike for coffee, or caffeine may delay the degeneration of neurons in the brain.” The loss of neurons that produce the neurotransmitter

dopamine causes the tremors and other symptoms of Parkinson’s. So is coffee a poison—or a blessing?

The January 2004 issue of *Vegetarian Times* has a largely positive article called “The Buzz of Caffeine.” Meir Stampfer MD, professor of nutrition and epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health, believes that evidence seems to support caffeine’s ability to lower the risk of colon cancer, gallstones, and kidney stones. He says, “The only downside to caffeine that I think is reasonably well-established is that it increases calcium excretion, so there’s a potential for bone loss if the calcium isn’t made up.”

Like Wonderland’s confused jury [headline], the jury’s still out on whether caffeine increases the risk of miscarriage for pregnant women. Brenda Eskenazi PhD, professor of Epidemiology and Maternal/Child Health at UC, Berkeley, notes a Swedish study in 2000 that detected more frequent early miscarriage in nonsmoking women who drank more than one cup of coffee a day, and the risk rose with each cup. Caffeine passes through the placenta, causing changes in fetal heart rate and breathing patterns. It also shows up in breast milk.

Chocolate has also been rescued from the dustbin.

Dark chocolate is now recognized as having “a superabundance of antioxidants.” A woman’s chocolate cravings may be related to magnesium deficiency. Yes, better sources of magnesium might be fresh green vegetables, bananas, figs, apricots, apples, oatmeal, or seeds, but that may be a harder sell to someone with PMS. Irritability, fatigue, and water retention are much worse when magnesium is not at an optimal level. Because it comes with sugar, in order to be beneficial, chocolate must be used judiciously, [think one truffle], and bittersweet chocolate is preferable to milk chocolate, according to *Natural Health*, June 2004.

My favorite source of magnesium is not consumed by mouth at all. Since November 1999, I have taken a long morning soak with 2 oz of Cell Wellness Restorer. It not only addresses my fibromyalgia on a daily basis, I also credit CWR with not having had a migraine since February 2000. I still have my prescription drug from that month in my fridge, and I’m thrilled to be migraine-free after more than 40 years. If this intrigues you, let me know.

But I digress. Let’s talk about just one water issue. The late John R. Lee MD was an opponent of fluoridation for more than 30 years.

I have all his articles on that topic, so you may want to be in touch with me. Dr Lee noted that a typical phosphate fertilizer factory produces 600 tons of waste fluoride per day. “EPA regulations on the handling of waste fluoride are very strict,” he said in his February ’01 *Medical Letter*, “since fluoride is a class 4 poison. Scrubbers must be used on the factory smokestacks to prevent fluoride waste from being emitted into the air. Fluoride waste cannot be piled on the ground, buried in the ground, or in any way allowed to enter any waterway since it kills all life forms and results in ‘dead’ streams and ‘dead lakes.’

“It is no secret that fluoride waste industries are delighted to sell it to unsuspecting communities as water fluoridation....Isn’t it interesting that, prior to sale to water utilities, it is a pollutant, whereas after sale...it somehow becomes a nutrient...?”

According to Dr Lee, the known toxic effects of industrial waste fluoride include: dental fluorosis, DNA damage, impaired cognition [ability to think], kidney disease, cancer, developmental problems, and seven other disorders.

Let’s hope Alice’s **drink me** bottle did not contain tap water! +++

Lessons learned by Morgan Spurlock, gastronomical guinea pig

“A spokeswoman for McDonald’s told *The Post* yesterday that no representative from the corporation had seen ‘Super Size Me’....

“ ‘Consumers can achieve balance in their daily dining decisions by choosing from an array of quality offerings and a range of portion sizes to meet their taste and nutritional goals,’ McDonald’s said in a statement.”

***The New York Post*, January 22, 2004**

We rarely go to movies, and hardly ever to those rated R. This past weekend we saw *Super Size Me*. It was showing in a trendy neighborhood in the cities, and we found it interesting that except for ourselves, most of those in the long lines on opening night were attractive people in their 20s and 30s. We did not see one obese person.

Both Dick and I noted that the movie reminded us of videos we have shown in *Let's Be Well*. In fact, actor/director Morgan Spurlock gave both the Baskin-Robbins heir, John Robbins, and Neil Barnard MD, president of Physicians for Responsible Medicine, cameo roles. People who closed their eyes in class when the surgery to remove the arterial plaque occurred in *Diet for a New America* would call that tame compared to the gastric bypass/liposuction surgery in *Super Size Me*.

For those of you who have not seen the movie, here are some highlights: Morgan Spurlock, a 6'2", 185-lb energetic 33-year-old New York film maker, got the idea for making the documentary while watching TV on Thanksgiving Day 2002.

"I was feeling like a typical American, very bloated and happy on the couch." At some point on the news they were talking about McDonalds being sued by two teens, a 14-year-old and a 19-year-old, who claimed their health was damaged by eating there.

"People from the food industry were saying, 'You

can't link kids' being fat to our food—our food is nutritious.'

"I said, 'How nutritious is it really? Let's find out' "

His mission, as director/star of *Super Size Me*: To eat three McDonald's meals a day for 30 days, including at least once, every food available, agreeing to "supersize" it every time that was offered, and to document the impact on his health.

His excellent health at the beginning of the experiment was recorded by a general practitioner, a gastroenterologist, a cardiologist, a dietitian, and an exercise physiologist. Each of them used superlatives to describe his physical condition: superb, outstanding, terrific. They expected that he would gain weight, his triglycerides might rise, and if he stopped exercising [because most Americans don't exercise], he would notice a decrease in his sense of well-being.

Over the course of the film, the five professionals monitored changes that occurred. Scores of cheeseburgers, thousands of French fries, and dozens of shakes and parfaits later, Spurlock had packed on 25 pounds. But his supersized body was the least of his problems. Within three days of beginning his drive-through diet, he was vomiting out the window of his vehicle. His doctors were shocked at how rapidly his body deteriorated.

"I got desperately ill. My face got blotchy, and I had this huge gut, which I had never had in my life.

My knees started to hurt from the extra weight coming on so quickly. "

His girl friend, a vegan chef, was "completely disgusted, not happy at all. But she realized that my goal was to try to educate people," Spurlock said.

"He was an extremely healthy person who got very sick from eating this McDonald's diet," said Daryl Isaacs MD. "None of us imagined he could deteriorate that badly. He looked terrible. The liver test was the most shocking thing. It became very, very abnormal." As his liver became increasingly toxic, Dr Isaacs compared what was happening to what he had seen in long-term alcoholics. His cholesterol shot up from 165 to 230, and he suffered headaches, depression, and chest pain so severe his doctors and his mother recommended that he stop the experiment.

Spurlock traveled to 20 cities, interviewing people on the street, the attorney for the girls who sued, school children, school lunch supervisors, and a lobbyist for the fast food industry. Paul Stitt, founder of Natural Ovens in WI, was interviewed about changes in behavior that occur when healthy meals are served in schools for at-risk kids. Although he made dozens of phone calls, no one from McDonald's would agree to an on-camera interview. It is interesting to note, however, that the supersize option is being phased out. A McDonald's spokesperson says there is no connection. +++

“Fishy, fishy in the brook, come and bite my little hook” revisited

Since I last wrote on this topic in *ink spots*, fall 2003, the topic continues to make news. (That newsletter is still posted on our website.)

Let's consider salmon. Here are some excerpts from “*Love Salmon? There's Scary News*,” an article on the internet dated 13 Jan 2004.

“Farm raised salmon, which is the kind commonly sold in grocery stores, contain significantly more cancer-causing chemicals than salmon caught in the wild, warn researchers from the University of Albany in NY, who tested 700 salmon worldwide.

“Although the US FDA insists that levels of 13 pollutants found in salmon are too low for serious concern, this new international study shows that farm-raised salmon have enough dioxins and other potentially cancer-causing pollutants that researchers are cautioning consumers to eat salmon no more than once a month. The Associated Press reports that the average dioxin level in farm-raised salmon was 11 times higher than that of wild salmon...For PCBs, the average was 36.6 ppb in farm-raised and 4.75 in wild salmon....In this study, salmon farmed in Northern Europe had the most contaminants, followed by North America and Chile. More than half the world's supply of salmon is farmed.

The article continues as Q&A: “**Where is most of the salmon farmed that we eat in the US?** Chile. And that's good news. The pollutant level in Chilean salmon was not too much higher than in some wild-caught salmon, notes AP.” [Have you ever tried to find out where the salmon offered in restaurants comes from? Even if your server goes to the kitchen and asks the chef, no one knows. Sometimes they can't even tell you if it is farmed or wild. We have stopped ordering it, and only buy it in specialty stores where there's a clear label that says, *wild Alaskan salmon*.

“**Where are these contaminants coming from?** The feed, which is made of fish oil and meal from just a few species of ocean fish. This concentrates the ocean contaminants to which farm-raised salmon are exposed. Wild salmon eat a greater variety. When any fish or animal absorbs these pollutants, they are stored as fat and not secreted. So if the fish has contaminants in its fat, and the fish is eaten by a human, the contaminants that were in the fish are then stored in the human's fat....

“**Will the farmers change the feed?** Many farmers in the US, Canada, and Chile are doing just that. But it's a slow process. Instead of using fish oil, they are switching to soybean oil and canola oil, which don't have the pollutants.” [Alums of our Let's Be Well and Weigh of Wisdom classes will not be comforted by those two choices.]

“**What level of pollutants is considered safe?** The government does not have one set level of dioxins and PCBs that is considered safe in foods....However, the salmon farming industry points out that all the pollutant levels are within the FDA's legal limits.

“**What can you do as a consumer?** Until the farmers

change the feed, your best bet is to buy wild salmon. Wild salmon sells for about \$15 a pound, compared with \$4-5 a pound charged for farm-raised salmon.

“**Will cooking help remove pollutants?** If you do eat farm-raised salmon, the FDA recommends cutting off the skin and grilling it....” [Evidently the FDA hasn't read any of the articles on the dangerous carcinogens in food cooked on the grill.]

Bottom Line Health adds some other information about farmed salmon that needs to be factored in. “Farmed salmon are hatched in plastic trays, crowded into unsanitary underwater cages, fattened with soybean pellets, dosed with antibiotics and pesticides, and injected with a synthetic dye that gives them their pink color. Without the dye, their flesh would be an unappetizing, pale gray....” The friend who sent me that article also sent a colored copy of “The 15 Colors of Salmon,” picturing a SalmoFan, from the Feb '04 issue of *Wired*:

“At the fish counter, farm-raised salmon looks just like wild salmon. But as the 'color added' labels cropping up in the supermarket suggest, the aquacultured fillet's pinkish hue is a testament to engineering, not nature. The labels refer to the food additives canthaxanthin and astaxanthin. Without them, the flesh of farmed salmon—which don't eat the krill that colors the wild ones—would be gray. [*Bottom Line* notes that canthaxanthin as an ingredient in sunless tanning pills has been banned for human use.]

“Complicating matters further, different retail buyers prefer different pinks. So clever fish farmers use the SalmoFan—a reference that, like paint chips, lets them pick a color. Add the right amount of chemical and get anything from bubble-gum bright to dusty rose. Hoffman-LaRoche, which manufactured the supplements (now made by DSM Nutritionals) gave the fan away with the 2003 shipments.” The author of the *Wired* article, Elizabeth Cha, comes to an interesting conclusion: “The environmental lobby wants grocers to note potential health risks [of the food additives]. Meanwhile, fish ranchers still have to overcome the fact that...it doesn't taste as good as wild. But it looks so pretty on a bagel.”

Hannah Lewis, writing in *Mix*, a publication of the Twin Cities Natural Food Co-ops, raises another issue in “GMO Salmon: now swimming upstream to a table near you.”

“The USDA expects Americans [who already eat 15 lbs of fish per year] to eat more fish as a result of a growing health trend. A rapidly growing global aquaculture industry is putting much more fish on the market, supplementing yields from increasingly depleted fisheries. In addition, farmers from North and South America to Asia are beginning to raise transgenic (genetically modified) fish. Judging from scant information in the media about transgenic fish, it will be about as poorly understood as any other genetically modified product on the market. If the FDA doesn't mandate labeling it, consumers may not know that they are buying it.” Badger your fishmonger, and contact your legislators to urge them to mandate labeling. +++

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Don't take your drinking water for granted

For healthy adults, the water that comes out of the tap is generally safe, according to the January 2004 edition of *Environmental Nutrition*. But all it takes to sicken hundreds of thousands of people is a single outbreak, like the 1993 *Cryptosporidium* incident in Milwaukee. The very young, the very old, pregnant women, people whose immune systems are weakened from cancer or AIDS could be at risk from simply turning on the faucet.

"Most municipal water is modestly acceptable..." says Erick Olson, senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington DC, "but we could do better." *Better* would mean that there would be regulations for contaminants that the EPA currently ignores: perchlorate, e.g., an ingredient in fertilizers, is in drinking water used by 20 million people. It doesn't violate health codes, because there is no standard, nor is there one for MTBE, a gasoline additive. [Ask me for a copy of the whole article.] +++

Notable quotables

"Traditional small dairies are going out of business. The family-owned dairies..., which once populated the northeast and midwest, are being replaced by large overcrowded, intensive 'dry lot' dairies in the hot and dry southwest ...With genetic manipulation and intensive technologies, modern dairy cows typically produce 100 pounds of milk a day—ten times what they would produce in nature....Worn out cows, depleted of calcium after years of heavy milk production, often slip and fall en route to slaughter....These 'downers,' which are still sold for human consumption, are typically left to lie in alleyways, without food, water, or veterinary care, until it's convenient to take them to slaughter, which may be days later....In a healthy environment, cows would live in excess of 20 years....More than 275,000 [dairy] cows are slaughtered after just 3 or 4 years, and ground up into hamburger and other low-quality beef products." *The Truth about Dairy*, www.farmsanctuary.org.

"Intensive farming techniques tend to be good for profits but not so good for the consumer. Cows, pigs, and chickens kept in densely packed feedlots and cages must be fed antibiotics to keep disease from taking over....Virtually all of the Atlantic salmon...comes from farms where salmon are raised in crowded floating cages. To keep disease and parasite levels down, pesticides, antibiotics, and other drugs, are dumped directly into the ocean. Salmon farms also produce a huge volume of feces...and sea lice that infect the already threatened population of wild Atlantic salmon. According to the WHO, salmon farms use more antibiotics by weight than any other farmed animal....[L]ook for wild Pacific salmon, fresh from April-Oct, and available frozen year-round." *The John R Lee Medical Letter*, March 2003. Or consider ordering wild Northern Pacific caught [not netted] wild salmon from 888-454-8862 or www.davesalcore.com.

Those who enjoy fishing in some of Minnesota's 11,842 lakes will find helpful a publication of the MN Dept of Health, *"A MN Guide to Eating Fish,"* listing names of lakes/rivers and kinds of fish that may not be safely eaten more than once a month, and the lakes/rivers where the listed fish should not be eaten at all, because of higher than average levels of mercury or PCBs. I picked up a copy at the *Living Green Expo* in St Paul in early May, but copies are available from the MN Dept of Health, 651-215-0700. See also their website: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/index/html.

"A growing number of US hospitals are serving up fast food like McDonald's, Burger King, and Wendy's in their cafeterias....One hospital recently introduced a 32-oz cup at its softdrink dispenser in the cafeteria to satisfy the current trend of 'upsizing.' What's worse, some hospitals are offering fast food and soft drinks as menu options for patients!" *Environmental Nutrition*, May 2004.

"A target of obesity lawsuits and a magnet for criticism that fast food is unhealthy, McDonald's Corporation will launch its new 'Go Active!' meals at all 13,500 of its US restaurants on May 6. The flab-fighting Adult Happy Meals will feature salads, bottled water, and advice on choosing a healthier lifestyle." *World news magazine*, May 1, 2004.

"Meals designed for children at family restaurants pack a big calorie punch, a new report shows. French fries, fried chicken strips, and hamburgers are standard fare..., according to a report released Tuesday by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington-based consumer group. A child's grilled cheese sandwich, French fries, and soda total more than 1,000 calories at one chain restaurant, and a cheeseburger and fries add up to roughly 800 calories in several others." *USA TODAY*, February 25, 2004. [Kids' menus at Applebee's, Denny's, Cracker Barrel, Olive Garden, Red Lobster, Chili's, and Outback Steakhouse are analyzed in the March 2004 issue of *Nutrition Action Health Letter*, which I have if you are interested. Also, a "fast food nutrition fact explorer" for menu items at various franchised restaurants can be accessed at www.fatcalories.com.] +++



LET'S TALK ABOUT PROCRASTINATION

I first discovered the round tuit about 30 years ago. We were given a rubber one that could be used as a grip for opening glass jars. I'm not sure what became of it, but it was very useful. I have the feeling that procrastination can be useful, too. You may have already guessed that I am going to write about people who haven't yet registered for Optimal Health Seminar. Actually, registrations have been coming in since February. But yes, we have lots of room for more.

I also remember having a poster in my classroom in the 60s that said, "*Not to decide, is to decide.*" We sometimes think that the advantage of procrastination is that by not taking action, we can avoid commitment. By not attending an event where we will be challenged to take responsibility for our own health, we can continue sabotaging it. It's kind of like skipping church the week that stewardship or tithing is announced as the sermon topic.

Often we get calls from people who want advice until they realize that changing their dietary choices and doing some consistent exercise may be required. If there's no magic pill that will fix their health issue instantly, they are not interested. C. Everett Koop MD, Surgeon General, 1981-1989, noted that 8 of 10 Americans die of some disease directly related to their diet. I doubt that the statistics have changed for the better. What we choose to eat is the foundation of our health, or lack of it. But the freedom to choose isn't much good if we do not have a sense of direction.

Another relevant issue is that health insurance doesn't cover diet counseling, organic foods, or supplementation that may be needed to repair years of poor choices. **Most of what a person needs to change his or her actions in relation to health, including learning how, must be paid out of pocket.** If you have developed an acute health crisis, or you have experienced some sort of trauma like an accident, and need drugs or surgery to save your life, insurance takes care of at least some of it. But if you are falling apart slowly—that is, if you are degenerating--nutrition is where you need to start.

Dave Frahm ND, founder of HealthQuarters, Colorado Spring CO, addressed this topic in his January 04 newsletter: "Bottom line, if you're working to regain health or protect it from any sort of chronic and/or degenerative condition, know that the most important things you'll need to accomplish will not be covered by insurance. Said another way, if all you do to help yourself regain health from something like cancer is to do things covered by your insurance, you will be leaving unaddressed some of the most important parts of any effective cancer battle plan."

We cannot promise that “Making Connections that Count” will exactly meet your needs for any chronic or acute health issue you are facing. It *will* challenge all of us to make changes in order to improve the quality of our lives. The Bible I like to use for my own personal time with God defines *to repent* as “to change the way you think and act.” Change can occur only when we exchange our comfortable present location for a less familiar destination.

Have you thought about the difference between being a tourist and a pilgrim? These are some ideas I have adapted from “Travel the higher road in your life,” by John Faust, senior adult minister at a large church in Louisville KY. If you think of life as a journey, ask yourself, “Am I a tourist or a pilgrim?” “Am I a spectator or a participant?”

Here are some differences: Tourists are always in a hurry. Pilgrims are patient; they set their sights not just on the sites but also on the ultimate goal in life. Tourists skim the surface. Pilgrims are willing to take the risks of looking deeper. Tourists visit attractive, popular locations when it is convenient. Pilgrims visit significant, sometimes dangerous places, and realize that not everything in life is attractive or convenient. Tourists want everything to be easy and troublefree. Pilgrims know there will be many difficult moments and accept them as part of life. Tourists look for the high points along the way and take roads with the least resistance. Pilgrims travel the high mountains as well as the low valleys and learn from both. Tourists are often self-centered and insensitive to those around them. Pilgrims care about others; they share with those they meet along the way as well as with those with whom they travel. Tourists may travel anywhere, but they are pilgrims to nowhere.

Historically, our Optimal Health Seminars have included a skit to balance the intensity of two days of lectures. In 2000 we did *Pilgrim's Progress.edu* in which our pilgrim Christian, with a heavy load on his back, and his companion Reggie [or Regenerate] went on a three-act journey to the City of Optimal Health. With Reggie's help, Chris was able to avoid the snares of Sugar and Hi Protein, personified by members of our troupe. Chris mistook the Golden Arches for the celestial city. The denouement occurred when Reggie was able to persuade Chris to take off his heavy backpack and reveal its unhealthy contents: sacks of sugar and white flour, Spam, diet coke, and other poor choices. Though we have a professional entertainer this year, Jack Pearson, a talented songwriter/musician, the goal is the same: to illustrate that humor and imagination play an important role in achieving wellness of spirit, soul, and body.

Let's not get too comfortable where we are. Traveling is both costly and rewarding. Angie went to Michigan in September to see what goes on at the *Michigan BarleyLife Convention*; Dick and I drove to Texas for their 12th convention in February. All of us came back tired in body, but refreshed in spirit—and full of ideas for making the 5th biennial Northfield MN event unforgettable. But not to decide **soon** whether to attend this year's *Optimal Health Seminar* may be to decide not to. Please **decide now** to join pilgrims who are willing to exchange comfort/convenience to learn how to make connections that count!

Carol/Dick Cover Angie/Jerry Olson Optimal Health Seminar hosts, July 29-31, 2004